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C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS FR 002268

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/15/2018  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [UNESCO](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: HFAC STAFFER MEETS ISRAELI AMBASSADOR TO UNESCO

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR LOUISE OLIVER FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Israeli Ambassador Kornbluth said that he would maintain a low-profile stance regarding Egypt's DG candidate Farouk Hosni, but provided new quotes to bolster the case against the Egyptian. On Mughrabi gate, Kornbluth said that no matter how far they bend in trying to find a conciliatory solution, the Jordanians and other Arabs will never be satisfied, making it ultimately a "no win" situation. Kornbluth expressed thanks to the U.S. since its return to UNESCO for helping Israel take steps towards normalizing its relationships with other Member States at the organization. End summary.

¶2. (C) Senior House Affairs Committee (HFAC) staff member, David Killion met with Israel's Ambassador to UNESCO, David Kornbluth on 10 December at the Israeli Embassy in Paris. He was accompanied by Ambassador Oliver and Mission political specialist, David Ostroff.

¶3. (C) Ambassador Kornbluth began the meeting by saying that Israel's huge improvement in its relations with UNESCO is due directly to the U.S. presence and involvement, led by Ambassador Oliver. He described Israel's chairmanship of the Electoral Group I as a breakthrough, given the fact that it is the first time that Israel has taken such a role within the United Nations. He also thanked the U.S. for its help and support over the year in managing the responsibilities linked with the job.

¶4. (C) Mr. Killion then explained the purpose of his trip to Paris, which was to express the serious concern of the HFAC regarding the candidature of Egypt's Farouk Hosni for the position of Director-General of UNESCO. Mr. Killion said that the HFAC was advising President-elect Obama's transition team on UNESCO matters, and wanted to communicate to both Member State representatives and key Secretariat managers that the incoming Democrats share the Bush administration's belief that Hosni's candidature, as an individual, was unacceptable.

¶5. (C) Kornbluth said that Hosni has been working actively against cultural normalization between Israel and Egypt for years, and that on the cultural front, the peace treaty between the two countries has been a failure due to Hosni's hard-line stance. Kornbluth said that it would be a mistake to build our opposition to Hosni based on a single quote on burning books, when there are literally dozens of equally hostile comments made publicly and which appeared in the press over the years. Kornbluth promised that the quotes would be released by the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem to us soon. (Note: We have now received them from Washington. End note.)

¶6. (C) The Israeli Ambassador reiterated his position, based on clear instructions from Jerusalem, that he maintain a low profile regarding attacks on Hosni, adding that if it is perceived by others to be a Arab-Israeli fight, it will hurt our shared goal of stopping his candidacy. Ambassador Oliver agreed, and said that it is clear that other Arab candidates cannot come forward until Hosni is out. She added that the more information we can get on Hosni, the easier it will be to strengthen our arguments against him.

¶7. (C) On another issue, Mr. Killion mentioned that the Israelis should tone down their talk of a possible boycott regarding Durban 2. He added that it was unhelpful for the Israelis to have taken a public position without talking with us first.

¶8. (C) In response to Ambassador Kornbluth's question on the state of play of different countries regarding Hosni, Ambassador Oliver said that based on her talks with various ambassadors, no one had taken formal positions yet, and that several countries which had been publicly cited by Egypt as supportive of Hosni's candidature had told her this wasn't true. Ambassador Oliver told Kornbluth that she is confident that as soon as other viable candidates come forward, Hosni's alleged support will fade away, including for the French.

¶9. (C) Mr. Killion said that in his talks with the French, he sensed that they were nervous about creating a problem for the incoming Obama administration, something he had never seen before. Killion went on to say that the Obama administration doesn't have the luxury of not having the United Nations work properly, as it creates huge political vulnerabilities every time there is a failure at the UN.

¶10. (C) Ambassador Kornbluth said that he felt the anti-UN "strain" has weakened in Israel, thanks in great part to DG Matsuura and DDG Barbosa's work. Kornbluth added that unfortunately, nobody knows about our successes with issues like the Mughrabi gate, because we've been able to reach consensus. It's only when it blows up that the press jumps on the subject. Kornbluth continued by saying that his main concern is keeping Mughrabi out of the newspapers so that Israeli ministers would be blamed for "giving in" to Jordan.

¶11. (C) Ambassador Oliver then asked about the current state of play, saying that she had heard that Jordan had equipment on site that the Israelis refused to let in, as well as that there were rumors

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circulating that construction could begin sooner rather than later regarding the Mughrabi issue. She added that she had also heard that Israel had received a letter from the World Heritage Center saying that elements of the Israeli design for the ramp were unacceptable.

OLIVER